

**Cross-cultural Buddhist monastery ruins on the Silk  
Road and beyond: the layout and function of Buddhist  
monasteries reconsidered**

Joy Yi Lidu





# **The Global Connections of Gandhāran Art**

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Gandhāran 'Atlas' figure in schist; c. second century AD. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, inv. M.71.73.136 (Photo: LACMA Public Domain image.)



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# Cross-cultural Buddhist monastery ruins on the Silk Road and beyond: the layout and function of Buddhist monasteries reconsidered

Joy Yi Lidu

## Introduction

New archaeological finds sometimes push and even force scholars to revisit established theories, long accepted traditions as well as previous archaeological excavations. The new excavations in Yungang above the caves in the western area are such, and they have high academic value. The excavations not only shed new light on the configurations of the monasteries in Pingcheng (modern Datong), but they also made clear how each section in the Yungang complex functioned. Furthermore, they proved that the freestanding monasteries above the caves were essential components of the Yungang complex as an entity. In addition, the excavations provided new opportunities to re-examine the configurations of freestanding Buddhist monasteries in the process of developments from west to east. This will help us understand the evolution of Buddhist dissemination along the Silk Road in the west and all the way to Pingcheng in the east in the context of Buddhist architecture and art. The dissemination of Buddhism is not just limited to the teachings of Buddhism; the configurations of Buddhist monasteries and Buddhist images are also an important part of the content of the propagation of Buddhism. Finally, the new excavations of the monastery will allow us to reconsider the associations and influences between the monasteries in Central Plain China, especially in the capitals (Pingcheng, Luoyang and Ye) of the Northern Dynasties (AD 386-534), and those in the Greater Gandhāran area, in particular Taxila and the Termez area in southern Uzbekistan, in Central Asia. Consequently, through the analysis, using new archaeological finds, recent and previous research, and literary sources, of the monasteries and the links between them, it is hoped that this study will delineate the evolution and features of the Buddhist monastery configurations in these regions.

The author proposes that the layout of the monastery in Yungang under discussion was directly associated with that of the monasteries in Taxila, and that the monastery configurations in the capitals of the Northern Dynasties were directly related to those in old Termez in Central Asia. The direct Buddhist influence on central China may have come from the Greater Gandhāran area, instead of India where the religion itself originated. It will be seen that the dominant configuration of a main *stūpa* in front and Buddha hall in rear (hereafter *qianta houdian* 前塔后殿) after the fourth century, in fact, first came from central Asia, not from China itself. And it eventually exerted a strong impact on the layout of Buddhist monasteries in Baekje and the Silla Kingdoms in ancient Korea.

## Archaeological excavations of Buddhist monasteries in Yungang

The earliest literary record of Yungang is by the Northern Wei (AD 386-534) geographer and essayist Li Daoyuan (d. 527) who described the grandeur of the complex (Li 2007: 316):

Stones were chiseled and the mountain was hewn according to the structure of the cliff surface. The images are realistic and grandiose. They are rare by the standards of this time. The [Buddha] Halls on the mountain and over water, and the smoke [of the incense]-filled temples, look toward each other. The grove and pond are like a bright mirror. Looking into the distance, a new vista dazzles your eyes...

At the time, Yungang was called the Lingyan cave-monastery (Li 2007). Later, in the *Weishu* (History of the Wei), Yungang was called Mount Wuzhou Buddhist cave-monastery (Wei 1974: VI:130; VII:151). By



Figure 1. The Yungang cave complex on Mount

the Tang dynasty (618–907), a large cave in Yungang could be higher than 60 meters and hold some 3,000 people (Junjirō & Kaigyoku 1924–32: T50:2060:425c26 and T50:2060:427c23).<sup>1</sup> The eminent monk Daoxuan (AD 596–667) observed that the carving of the images was fantastic, the beauty of the ornamentation was unparalleled, and each cave was unique (Junjirō & Kaigyoku 1924–32: T50:2060:427c27). The name Yungang was not used until the Ming dynasty (AD 1368–1644), when it occurs for the first time in an inscription recording the repairs to the Yungang Fortress. The Yungang cave complex derived its name from the sacred peak of Mount Wuzhou in which all the caves were excavated. Yungang means ‘cloud ridges’.

The Yungang complex is located south of Mount Wuzhou and north of the Wuzhou River (modern Shili River) and is 6 kilometers west of Datong city in Shanxi Province in north China. The 45 major caves are divided into three sections – east (caves 1 to 4), middle (caves 5 to 20), and west (caves 21 to 45). They were hewn from the mountain cliff surface and stretch out from east to west for more than half a mile (Figure 1). The excavation of the rock-cut caves was initiated by the imperative to carry on the Buddha Dharma infinitely and the wish to pray for blessings for the Northern Wei imperial family who commissioned the caves.

In 1902, the Japanese architect Itō Chūta (AD 1867–1954) ‘rediscovered’ Yungang accidentally and published two articles introducing it to the world (Itō 1906: nos. 197/198).<sup>2</sup> In 1907, the French sinologist Émmanuel-Édouard Chavannes (AD 1865–1918) investigated Yungang and other caves, recording them with his lens. His *Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale* (Chavannes 1909–15) contains seventy-eight valuable photographs of Yungang. After this, the study of Yungang entered a new era of visual images (Chavannes 1909–15). These early expeditions to China at the beginning of the twentieth century opened a new chapter in the scholarship of Yungang.

Ground-breaking research was made possible when Su Bai came across the Jin stele inscription, on the basis of which he was able to shed fresh light on periodization and chronological sequence of the caves and provided a new dating scheme, which, due to lack of clear evidence, had long puzzled scholars. What really advanced the study of the Yungang complex was the archaeological findings of the freestanding monasteries above the rock-cut caves in 2010, i.e. the monastery remains in the vast terrace between

<sup>1</sup> T refers to *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (Junjirō & Kaigyoku 1924–32).

<sup>2</sup> See also *Dongfang zazhi*, 1919: 16, nos. 2/3. This article was translated into Chinese and collected together with Chen Yuan’s article (Chen 1980: 398–409). Chūta Itō was the first to give numbers to the caves (current caves 5 to 13).





Wuzhou. (Photo: Yungang Research Academy.)

caves 39 and 45 (Figure 2).<sup>3</sup> For the first time, we learned that the freestanding monasteries were an inseparable component of the entire cave complex and the residential area was, in fact, above the rock-cut caves. In addition, the finds shed significant light on the configuration of a Buddhist monastery in the Northern Wei capital, of which we had no previous indication. Most importantly, the light they threw on cross-cultural influences led scholars further to understand the direct association between Taxila and Yungang, of which we had no clear, hard evidence before.

The fully excavated remains of the monastery under discussion sit to the north and face south. The north part of the monastery is well preserved, but the south side is badly damaged without many ruins. The remains are 60–62 metres wide from west to east, and 44 meters from south to north. Judging from the extant ruins, archaeologists believe that the configuration of the monastery is primarily composed of a *stūpa* and living cells surrounding it (Figure 3). A row of cells (F20–F22) bounds both the north and east sides of the monastery's quadrangle. Another row (the middle cells, F18 and F19) separates the quadrangle into east and west courts, the former being slightly larger. In front of all of the cells was a cloister, the plinths of which (Z1–Z12) are positioned 1.8–2.1 m away from the cells. In the centre of the east court, slightly towards the south, is the base of a *stūpa* (Figure 4). The dimensions of the square *stūpa*, measuring 15 m wide and 0.5 m in height, are not very large. Around the *stūpa*, glazed flat and semicircular tiles were unearthed.

This means that the glazed tiles were used for the *stūpa* and that the *stūpa* is a multi-storied wooden structure with glazed tiles for the eaves. This can be attested to by the *stūpas* carved in the caves in imitation of the structure of wooden *stūpas*. The *stūpa* also faces south like the monastery itself and is made of rammed earth. The *stūpa* base, on top of which are forty column holes, is one of the earliest unearthed thus far. The north side of the base is 12 m from the bases of the columns in front of the north cells. The cells contain single and double rooms (cells F6, F7, F14, F18, F21 are double) with rammed-earth walls, the inner side of which are of plaster mixed with grass, while the exterior is covered with white lime. All the doorways face south as well. Only two north-south cells (F18 and F19) survived in the middle of the court. Their interior walls show traces of plaster mixed with grass and white lime. The exterior

<sup>3</sup> Since Japanese archaeologists first started the excavations in the 1940s, many archaeological excavations have been conducted in the Yungang complex. Among them, the excavations conducted in the 1990s in front of caves 9 and 10, and the two in 2010 and 2011 above cave 39, and caves 5 and 6 are especially important. All of the excavations were primarily in front of and above the caves: four areas above the caves (east of caves 1, 3, 5 and 6, as well as in the area between caves 39 and 45 in the western section), and four in front of the caves (caves 3, 8, 9–13, and the five Tanyao caves), among which the excavation in front of caves 9 and 10 is of particular significance, see Mizuno & Toshio 1951, VII: 57–68, 123–9; XV: 91–9, 185–90). For the excavations above cave 39, see Zhang, Li & Jiang 2011: 127–130. See also Zhang 2016: 533–562.

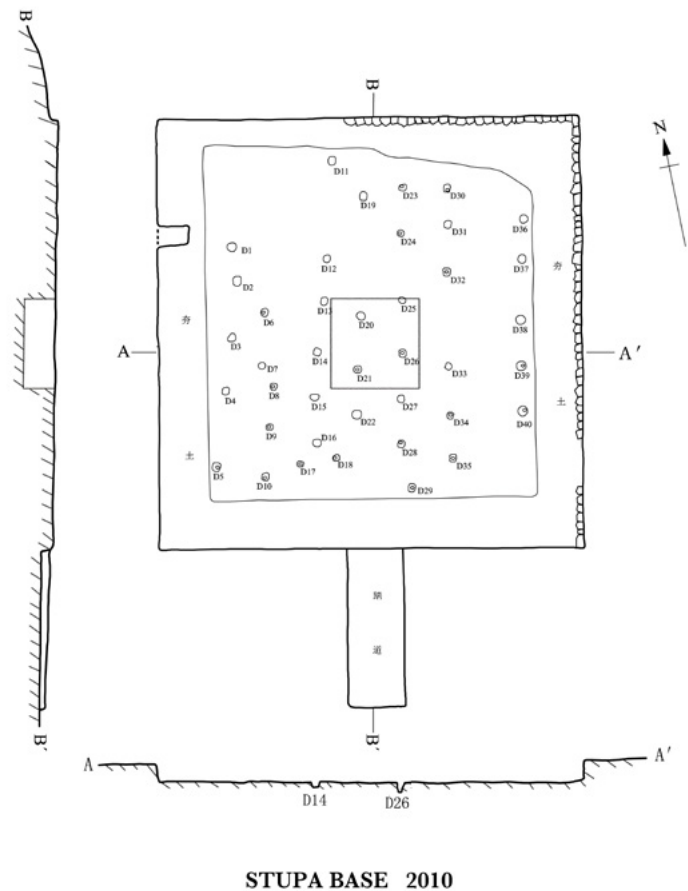






Figure 3. Yungang monastery with single and double room cells. (Photo: modified from Zhang Qingjie, *Kaogu xuebao* 4 [2016], pl. 2.)

walls show only plaster mixed with grass. Cell 18 is a double room cell of rectangular shape. The main wall is made of rammed earth. Cell 14, rectangular in shape, is also a double room cell. On the front wall is a cooking stove half sunken into the wall. The top of the stove is round. Two column plinths (Z11 and Z12) are found in front of the cell. The distance between them is 3.65 m. Cell 7 is also a double room cell, rectangular in shape. The doorway is in the south-east corner. Two column plinths (Z5 and Z6) are found. Cell 6 is a double room cell as well, but square in shape. The main wall is made of rammed earth. The two plinths in the front are 4.9 m apart. The inner room cell reveals vermilion paint in grass-mixed plaster. Vermilion paint on walls has only, so far, been found on the walls in the ruins of the royal palace of the Northern Wei in



STUPA BASE 2010

Figure 4. Yungang stūpa Base, 2010. (Photo: modified from Zhang Qingjie, *Kaogu xuebao*, 4 [2016], pl. 13.)



Caochangcheng 操場城 in Datong and in the ruins of the Yonggu imperial mausoleum. This indicates that the decorations in these cells were above standard and they were the living quarters for high-rank, eminent monks.

Cells 19, 20, 22, 16, and 17 are single rooms. Three cells (F20-22) are on the east side of the monastery. The interior and exterior walls show traces of grass-mixed plaster, but the interior wall is also covered with white lime. It should be mentioned that in front of cell 22, there is a short wall made of semicircular tiles with column plinths in front of it.

It is worth noting that cells 16 and 17 are juxtaposed east-west, side by side, instead of north-south, as they should have been. The interior wall is covered with grass-mixed plaster and white lime. Cell 16 is almost square. The east, west, and north walls are made of rammed earth, but the south wall is made of piled-up stone slabs and tiles. The doorway faces south in the middle. Cell 17 is rectangular in shape. The west and north walls are made of rammed earth. The doorway is in the south-west corner of the cell facing south.

Up to now, these findings are the first scientifically excavated and relatively intact freestanding monastery ruins in China. Archaeologists have unearthed the ruins of a *stūpa* base, twenty cells (thirteen in the north [F3-15], two in the middle [F18-19], three in the east [F20-22], and two in the south-west [F16-17]), two pottery kilns (Y501 and Y502) in the south-west section of the monastery, many tiles and tools. Some tiles are glazed, and others are engraved with characters of *xiku* (west cave) or *chuanzuo wuqiong* 傳祚無窮 (support the imperial rulers and extend prosperity infinitely). The *xiku* tile indicates that at the time the cave complex was divided into at least east and west sections. It is unclear whether there was a middle section as we divide the caves now. They also found tiles with lotus-born figures, a stone stele (Figure 5) with a pointed niche and acanthus pattern on the face of it, and other images. The *stūpa* was the physical centre and main object of veneration. It was primarily for the liturgical purposes of worshipping and circumambulation. It is worth mentioning that archaeologists also discovered earth beds, tops of kitchen ranges, and flues in the cells. These important clues led scholars to believe that the cells were the living quarters for daily use.

The significance of the findings of the monastery cannot be emphasized enough. They not only enriched our knowledge about the essential components of the Yungang complex, but also provided concrete evidence about where Buddhist monks lived and translated the Buddhist canonical texts mentioned in the literary records.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the excavations explain why the Yungang caves themselves are all shrine chapels with images and *stūpas*, and used primarily for worshipping, repentance, making offerings, chanting, and possibly *jiangjing* (sūtra lecture), *changdao* (vernacular sūtra singing and preaching), or merely for merit and virtue accumulation in some caves. More importantly, they explain why there were no *vihāra* (monks' residence) caves. That, for a long time, was a mystery to scholars.

Several observations need to be specially pointed out here:

1. The date of the monastery is essential. In the remains of the monastery, flat-glazed tiles were used but there were almost no polished black tiles or eaves-tiles found used in the Northern Wei Palace in Caochangcheng and the Yonggu Mausoleum in Fangshan. Many of them are grey ceramic tiles thinner than the polished black tiles and eaves-tiles. A large number of glazed tiles appeared. Previously, only a

<sup>4</sup> In the 1147 Jin stele inscription, Cao Yan mentions the ten temples in Yungang and the 'stone chambers' in which monks translated the sūtras in the Yungang complex, but for a long time, we had no hard evidence to verify the authenticity of the inscription before these new excavations revealed the full picture of the site. According to the Jin stele, there were ten temples in the great rock-cut cave-temple complex, and they were constructed during the Northern Wei. Mention was also made of several stone chambers above the cave temples where the Indian monks translated sūtras. For the record of the stone chambers above the caves in the Jin stele inscription, see Su 1966: 52-75.



Figure 5. Stone stele from Yungang monastery.  
(Photo: modified from Zhang Qingjie,  
*Kaogu xuebao* 4 [2016], pl. 14).



Figure 6. Drawing of the image on Figure 5. (Image: modified  
from Zhang Qingjie, *Kaogu xuebao* 4 [2016], pl. 19.)

few glazed bricks appeared in the ruins of the well in the Northern Wei Palace. Very few varieties of tiles were found and many have characters. Animal tiles often used during the Taihe era (AD 477-499) of the Northern Wei were not seen. The reliquary pit and objects unearthed in the base of the *stūpa* in Dingzhou, Hebei Province, dated the fifth year of Taihe (AD 481), were not found in the *stūpa* base here.<sup>5</sup> Taking everything into consideration and on the basis of what was unearthed in the ruins, archaeologists believed that the initial date of the monastery was earlier than that of the Northern Wei monastery in Dingzhou (Zhang 2016: 533-62). It should have been before the Taihe era, and could have been as early as Emperor Wencheng's era (reigned AD 452-465). Now both literary sources and hard evidence confirm that the monastery was started as early as the Wencheng era. This is the earliest monastery thus far excavated. Most importantly, the configuration revealed has significant academic value in figuring out the evolution of the monasteries from Greater Gandhāra through Central Asia eastwards to Pingcheng, the Northern Wei capital.

2. According to the archaeological report, the two cells (F16 and 17) in the south-west corner in the west court are aligned east-west, not north-south, as they should have been, and as the middle or east cells are. In addition, as discussed above, the material used for cells 16 and 17 is different from that used for the north cells. Furthermore, the ruins of aprons (south of plinth Z1-Z4) in front of the northern cells extend all the way south to where they are crushed beneath the east wall of cell 17. All the evidence implies that cells 16 and 17 were added at a later time after the aprons were constructed. In addition, and more importantly, the apron ruins also suggest that there must have been earlier structures on the west side of the west court to the north of cells 16 and 17. The traces of two columns and the large space suggest that it is highly likely the structures at the north of cells 16 and 17 were intended to be shrines

<sup>5</sup> See Hebeisheng Wenhua ju Wenwu Gongzuodui 1966: 252.

for liturgical purposes. No traces of vihāra cells in the west side of the west court were seen. The wide distance between the two columns also provides a clue that the northernmost structure in this space was bigger than the north-side cells. It is more like a shrine with larger space.

3. In addition, the above-mentioned narrative stone stele which was discovered on site can also be helpful to support our proposal about the supposed shrines on the west of the monastery, since the figures in the narrative scene are holding ritual implements (Figure 6). This may illustrate the ritual practices of the time at the site. The stele contains a pointed niche, inside of which in the centre are a cat-like animal on a ritual implement and a bird at the bottom. The animal between the cat and bird is illegible. Outside the niche on the right, above a lion is a kneeling figure holding the ritual implement. On the left, above a dog is a standing figure who is wearing a V-neck top and loose pants of the Northern Wei holding a Heaven pestle ritual implement. On the top, above the niche front, are two animals and a kneeling figure who is holding a moon-shaped symbol in his right hand and a ritual implement with a handle in his left hand. The ritual implements and animals shown here in this stele are worth further examination, but at least they display some sort of ritual being conducted. Further concrete evidence will also be needed to answer our question about the surmised shrines with full confidence. The observation is made according to the analysis of the excavated ruins and the sizes of the two structures to the north of cells 16 and 17, and based on the configuration of the monasteries in Taxila, Greater Gandhāra, which had a direct connection, as I shall argue, with the monastery in Yungang.

4. The excavations shed significant light not only on the monastery configuration in Yungang itself, but also in Pingcheng (Siyuan monastery 思远寺), and on those constructed during the Pingcheng era (Siyuan monastery 思燕寺). These are all single-court monasteries, but the Siyuan monastery developed to the configuration of *qianta houdian*. The configuration of the Siyan Monastery in Chaoyang city, Liaoning Province, commissioned also by Empress Dowager Wenming (d. 490) during the Pingcheng era, is similar to the Yungang plan but it is a single court monastery.<sup>6</sup> The layout of the Yungang monastery, with the *stūpa* in the centre surrounded by cells, had not been found before in any of the excavated monasteries.

The Yungang monastery, though differentiating itself from those excavated thus far, shares striking similarities in configuration with some early monasteries in Taxila, especially with Pippala and Khāder Mohrā near Dharmarājikā. At the same time, each monastery displays its own cultural characteristics, with local artisans' own innovation to fit religious ritual purposes, spaces, and aesthetic tastes. An analysis of these monasteries in a comparative manner will delineate the dissemination of Buddhism and changes of the configuration of Buddhist monasteries in the process.

### Monasteries in Taxila in Greater Gandhāra

Greater Gandhāra includes the Swat Valley to the north, the western Punjab including the ancient metropolis of Taxila to the east, eastern Afghanistan to the west, northern Afghanistan, southern Uzbekistan, and even parts of the region around the Tarim Basin in today's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China (Salomon 2018: 11). All of these regions came under the cultural influence of Gandhāra in the early centuries of the Common Era. Gandhāra provides one of the most fascinating chapters in ancient history, a vital crossroads of diverse cultural and political traditions that thrived for several centuries, with a predominately Buddhist orientation. Trade routes facilitated the movement of artistic ideas and techniques that entered Gandhāra from four directions, linking the Mediterranean, the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, Persia, and China (Jongeward et al. 2012: 8).

<sup>6</sup> See Liaoningsheng & Chaoyangshi 2007.



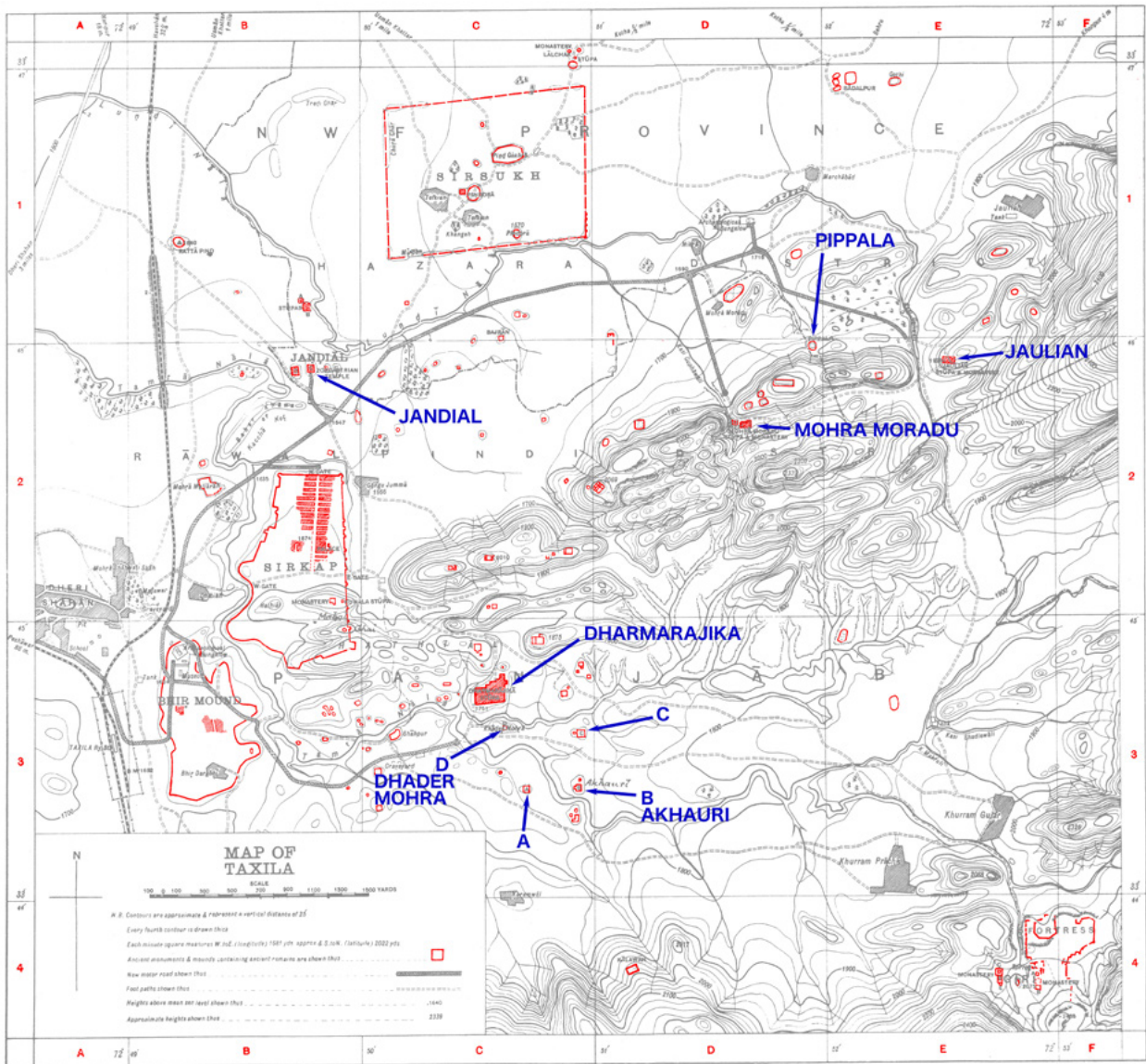


Figure 7. Map of Taxila (modified from Marshall 1951: vol. 3, pl. 1).

The crisscross cultures and influences are mirrored and valued in the development of Buddhist dissemination. The configuration of the Buddhist monastery is a direct reflection of the interlaced cultures. Taxila in Greater Gandhāra, strategically situated at the junction of the great trade routes from eastern India, western Asia, Kashmir, and Central Asia, became a religious heartland with Buddhist monuments throughout the valley. Buddhist archaeological sites at Taxila include the Dharmarājikā complex, the four groups of Chir Tope remains (A, B, C, D), the Kālawān grouping, the Giri monasteries, the Jaṅḍiāl complex, the Mohrā Morādu monasteries, the Pippala monastery, the Jauliāñ complex and many other remains (Figure 7).<sup>7</sup> Among them, the Khāḍeḥ Mohrā remains (Chir Tope D) and the Pippala monastery demonstrate architectural resemblance with the counterpart in Yungang, and are our focus for discussion.

<sup>7</sup> The numbers and names of the monasteries and *stūpas* used here were first used by John Marshall in his account of archaeological excavations.

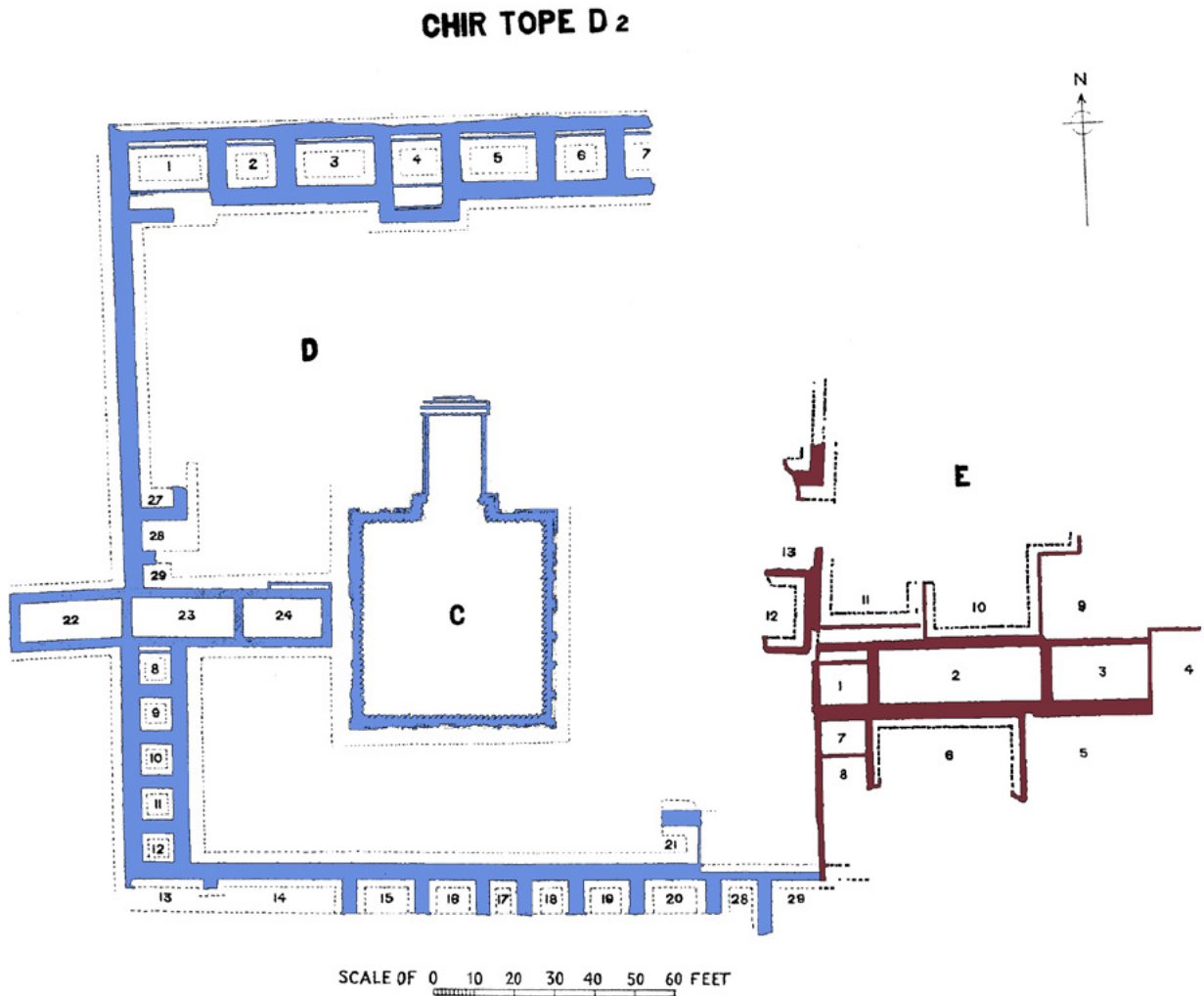


Figure 8. Layout of the Khāder Mohrā D2 monastery. (Plan modified from Marshall 1951: vol. 3, pl. 69a).

The four Chir Tope monasteries are situated to the south-east of the Dharmarājikā. They are of great interest 'because they date from the period (c. AD 40-150) when the diaper type of masonry was in vogue, and show us how the quadrangular monastery was being evolved under the early Kushan kings. They also furnish examples of several varieties of masonry not met on other sites' (Marshall 1951: vol. 1, 315). Most significantly, they seem to have survived only to bear witness to the shared features with the newly excavated monasteries in the Yungang Buddhist cave complex.

They demonstrated that by the end of the first century the living cells were in a more private enclosure and the old type of monastery with its disordered planning was gone. The *stūpa* is still of primary importance, but 'the tendency is to separate it from the living quarters of the monks, which are now securely enclosed in a walled-in quadrangle' (Marshall 1951: vol. 1, 320). Clearly, the old monastery layout initially had the *stūpa* and the living quarters together in one court, as shown in the Yungang monastery, and as we also see in Khāder Mohrā D2 (Figure 8) and Pippala (Figure 9), as well as in Dharmarajika M5. Only later on was the *stūpa* separated from the living cells.

It is worth noting that the Khāder Mohrā complex includes two sets of monastery complexes, D1 and D2, which together include three courts, not two or one, as is usual, and that of the four Chir Tope (A, B, C, D) sites, Khāder Mohrā D2 is the only one with *stūpa* and living cells in one space. Here the *stūpa* is in the





Plan of monasteries and stūpas.

Figure 9. Layout of the Pippala monastery. (Plan modified from Marshall 1951: vol. 3, pl. 98a).

centre of the quadrangle with cells on three sides and larger chambers on the fourth side, surrounding it within one court. This suggests that D2 should be the earliest monastery of all four, and the rest were newer versions from when the living cells were disposed in a separate and more securely enclosed space. D2 does not seem to belong to the complex and should be considered a separate monastery

altogether. It should have been the first constructed in the group with the complex later extended to D1. What John Marshall refers to in his discussion of the evolution of the monasteries is D1, which does show further development in plan, with two separate courts. However, D2 is quite different, as Marshall (1951: 321) admitted himself:

In the other group (D2) the plan is quite different. Here the *stūpa* stood in the midst of a large court, with rows of cells on three sides and what appear to have been several larger apartments, including no doubt an assembly hall, on the fourth side, though only a few fragments of the latter have survived. The plan is thus generally similar to that of the small monastery M5 at the Dharmarājikā, which is also referable to the second century A.D., though to a somewhat later date than this one.

Only later in the new layout were the *stūpa* and the living quarters segregated. The *stūpa* initially was simply left outside without any enclosure, as seen in Chir Topes A and C (Figures 10 and 11). In the new living court, only three sides of the monastery have cells. The fourth side is either left bare or occupied by a small *stūpa* chapel for the private use of the monks. 'On these two sites the hall of assembly and other indispensable adjuncts were in all probability outside the monastery, and may have been built of perishable materials, as they had been in the earlier *saṅghārāmas*.' (Marshall 1951: vol. 1, 320.)

Further developments and changes are best exemplified in Chir Tope B (Akhauri) (Figure 12). Here only two sides of the monastery have living cells; the east side contains a private chapel (F25) in the middle, and the north side comprises an assembly hall, a common-room, and a *stūpa*-chapel (D1). The main *stūpa* still remains left in the open, facing the entrance to the monastery, as it was on sites A and C. The small subsidiary *stūpas* (A1-A5), the row of five chapels (B1-B5), and the smaller monastic court E are all believed to be later accretions.

Khāder Mohrā is the largest of the four Chir Tope monasteries. Monastery D1 (Figure 13), the westernmost section of Khāder Mohrā, now seems to be the final stage of the four in the group since it is the most

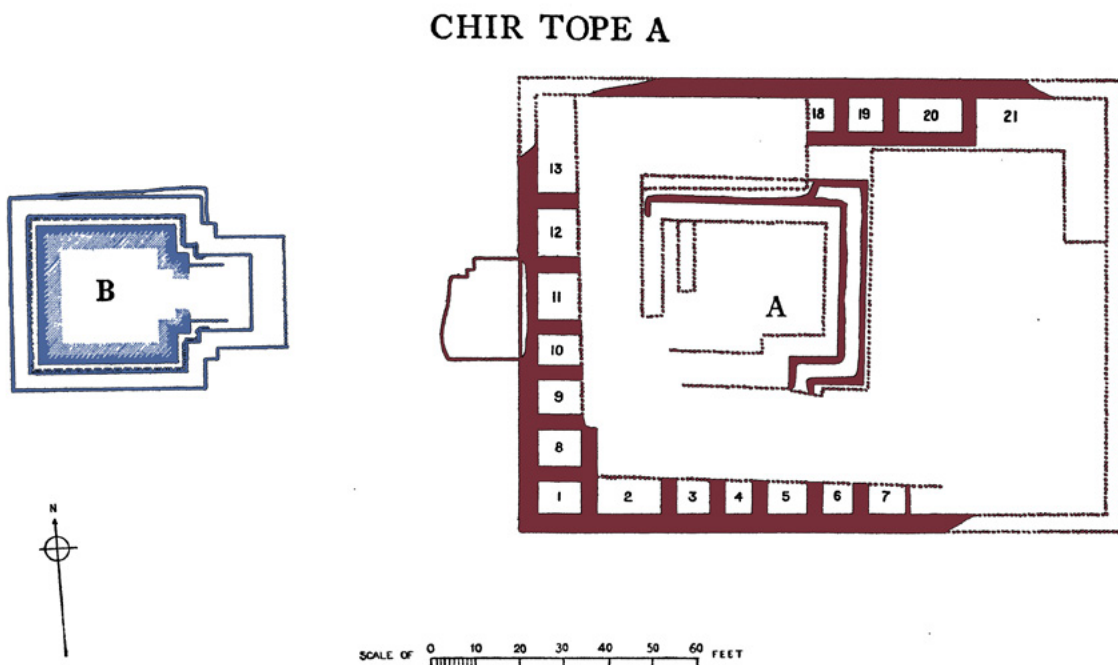


Figure 10. Plan of Chir Tope A. (Modified from Marshall 1951: vol. 3, pl. 67a.)

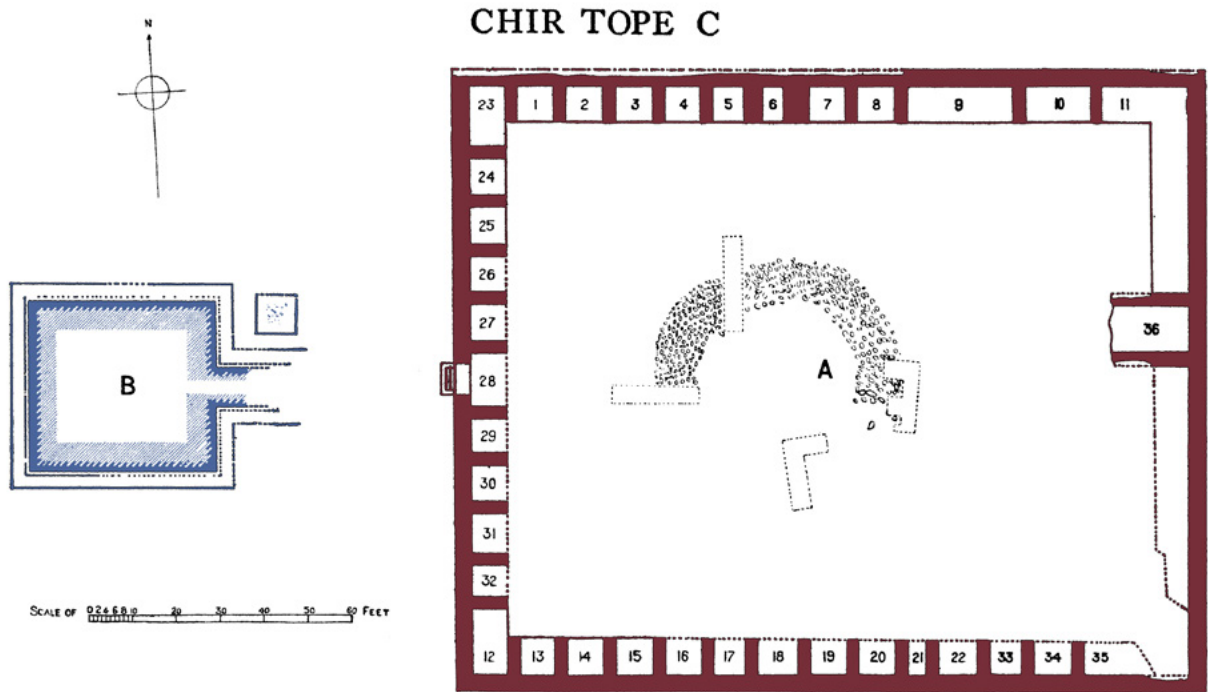


Figure 11. Plan of Chir Tope C. (Modified from Marshall 1951: vol. 3, pl. 68a.)

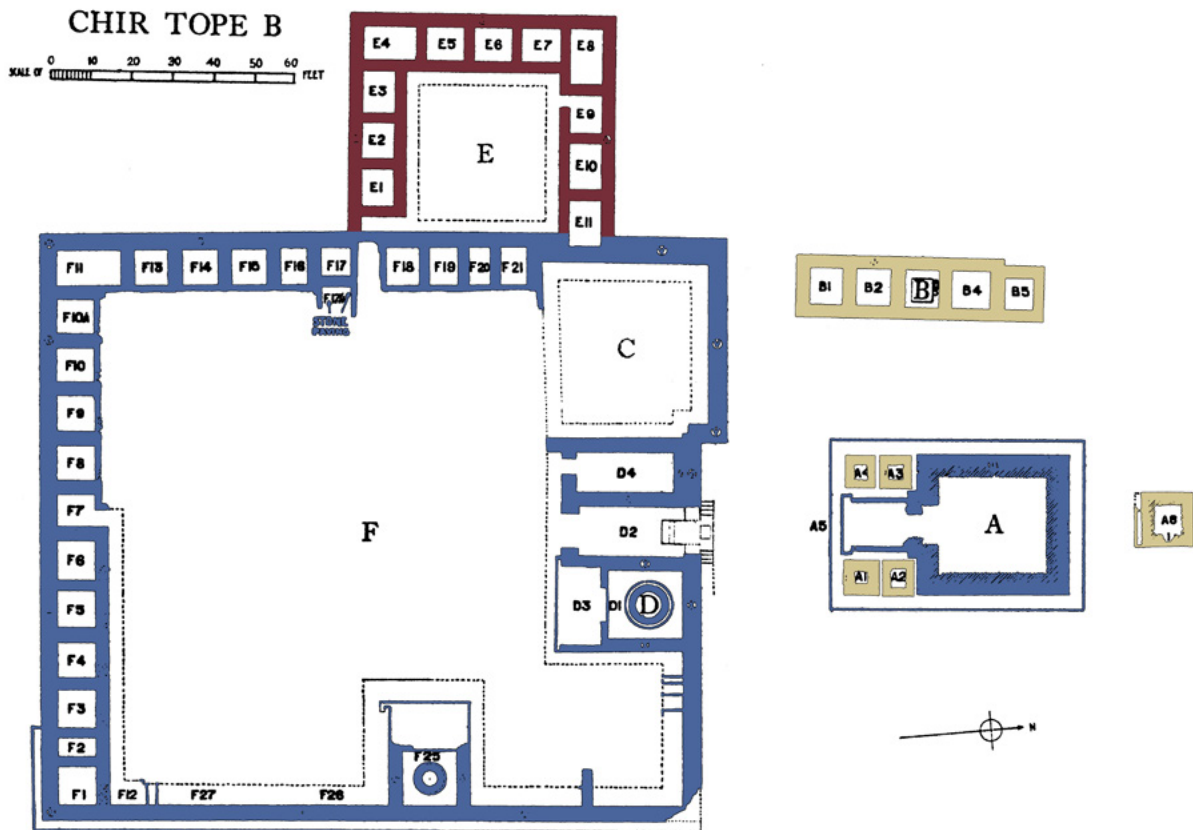


Figure 12. Plan of Chir Tope B (Akhauri). (Modified from Marshall 1951: vol. 3, pl. 67b.)

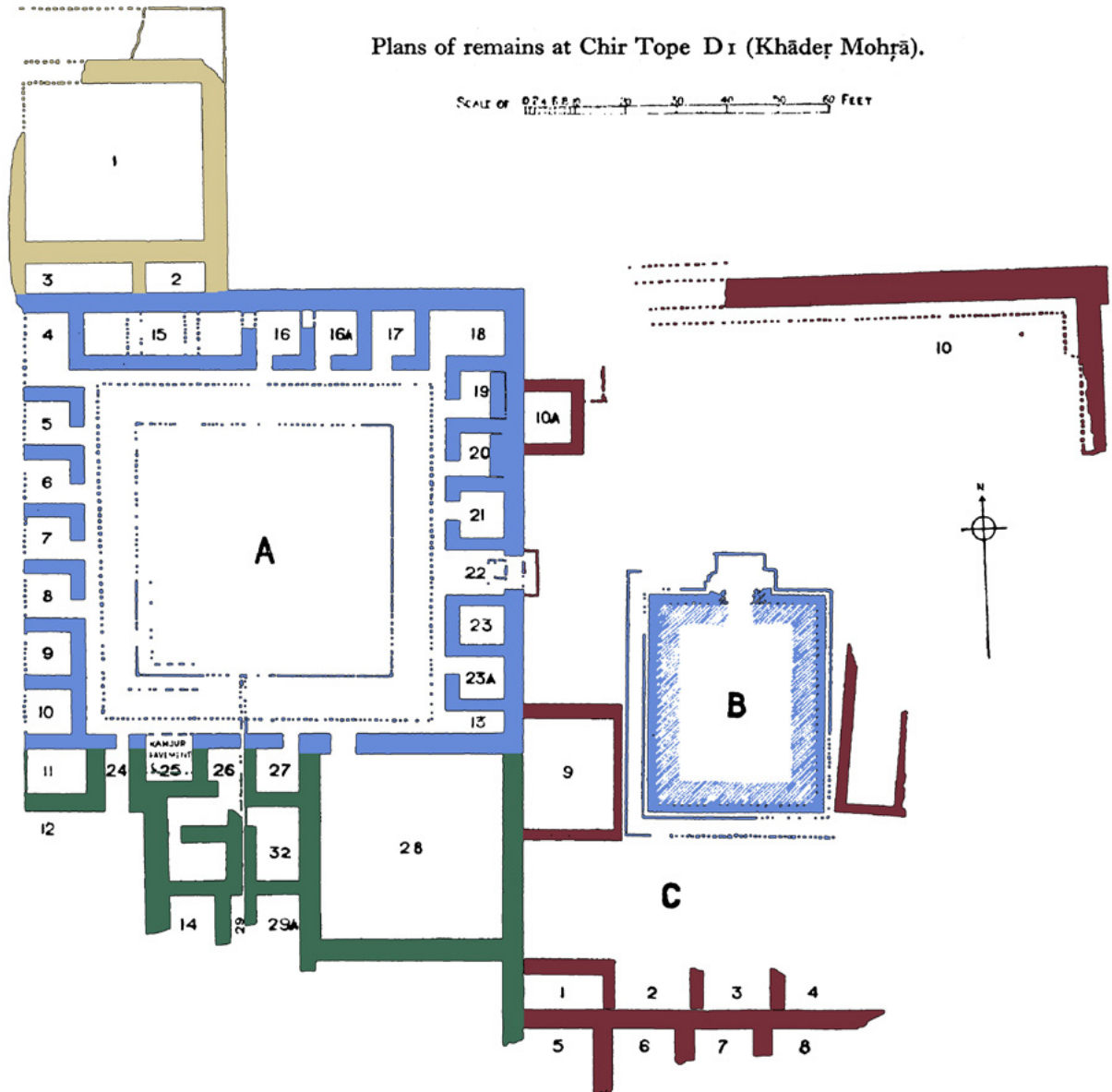


Figure 13. Plan of Khāder Mohrā monastery D1. (Modified from Marshall 1951: vol. 3, pl. 68b.)

complicated. It contains a *stūpa* and court with living cells situated in a separate space. The *stūpa* is unique. Instead of having the flight of steps facing the entrance to the monastery, as usual, it faces north. What this could suggest is unclear now. Further investigation is needed. Does this imply that the initial plan only included the *stūpa* court as with D2? Both *stūpas* face north. The walls surrounding the *stūpa* of D1 have mostly disappeared. The *stūpa* therefore now looks like it is standing in the court on its own with some surviving cells. Initially the *stūpa* court should have been centred with the *stūpa* surrounded by living cells. This is similar to the configuration of its counterpart in Yungang under discussion, with the *stūpa* in the centre of the cells. The monastery court at the west end of Khāder Mohrā not only bears cells on three sides of the quadrangle, it also has an assembly hall at the south-east corner, as well as a complex of several small chambers alongside.

On the north side of the quadrangle court, a rectangular hall, possibly a refectory, was added to the monastery later. Unfortunately, its counterpart in Yungang does not provide us with a clear picture of

the configuration of its western court. The clues we have are cells 16 and 17 to the south, as discussed earlier, the aprons sunken beneath the cells, and the traces of the two columns to the west of the aprons. There must have been some structures with the aprons in front. Nevertheless, both the Yungang monastery and Khāder Mohrā D1 have two courts, and both eastern courts have the *stūpa* as its physical centre of veneration. They both also share similarities with Khāder Mohrā D2, the earliest monastery configuration in the group.

Another monastery that shares similar configuration is the Pippala complex (Figure 9). There might be a direct connection (Li 2014: 288). Situated in the north-east of the Buddhist hub of Dharmarājikā at the foot of the hills in Taxila between Mohrā Morādu and Jauliāñ, the Pippala complex is composed of a main *stūpa* courtyard in the east section, and a quadrangle monastery of later addition to its west, as well as a *stūpa* enclosed in a court to the north. The main *stūpa* (A) is placed in the centre of the courtyard which is to the east of the quadrangle monastery. In addition, four small *stūpas* (B, C, D, and E) are put around the main *stūpa* and one is placed outside of the courtyard (K). This is unusual. In general, only one main *stūpa* is placed in the centre of the courtyard. Here we see five *stūpas* in the *stūpa* courtyard to help to relieve crowds of worshippers to the main *stūpa*. The cells originally all faced the main *stūpa*.

It must be emphasized that the remains of the monastery are found to be from two periods. The *stūpa* courtyard of the monastery to the east, which comprises an open quadrangle in the centre and ranges of cells on its four sides, dates from late Parthian or early Kushan times and fell into ruins before the fourth and fifth centuries since ‘at that time a second monastery was erected over the western side of it, completely hiding beneath its foundations all that remained of the old cells and veranda on this side’ (Marshall 1951: 365). The rest of the early monastery was converted into a *stūpa* court because everything was levelled to the ground and dismantled except the *stūpas* in the open quadrangle and the back wall of the cells, which is the enclosure wall of the new courtyard (Marshall 1951: 365). Thus, the original cells surrounding the main *stūpa* were removed, enlarging the *stūpa* court. A later *stūpa* (G) was built in the north-east corner of the courtyard, partially atop the foundations of cells 4, 5 and 6.

The western section, the later monastery, is built of heavy semi-ashlar masonry and is well preserved, but it is smaller than the *stūpa* court monastery on the right. The plan is similar to that of the monasteries at Jauliāñ and Mohrā Morādu. It consists of a court of cells on the north, with a hall of assembly, kitchen, and refectory on the south, and the converted *stūpa*-court on the east. Worth noting is that the hall of assembly, kitchen, and refectory resemble the corresponding chambers of Mohrā Morādu and Jauliāñ. This suggests that the further development of the monasteries began to show certain evolving patterns. The court of cells was two storeys tall and consisted of an open quadrangle with cells on its four sides and a broad-pillared veranda. In the centre of the court was a small rectangular depression about 30 cm in depth and paved with stone, which received the rain-water from the roof and directed it out through a drain on the western side passing under cell 23. Inside cell 31 is a well preserved *stūpa*. The floor level of the cell in which the *stūpa* stands is 75 cm below that of the rest of the monastery, and this circumstance as well as the character of the *stūpa* itself, which is of diaper masonry, led John Marshall to believe that the *stūpa* was built originally in one of the cells, or possibly in a chapel, of the earlier monastery and then incorporated into the later monastery, when the latter was erected on the ruins of its predecessor (Marshall 1951: vol. 1, 366).

From the analysis of these monasteries, it can be seen that the four Chir Tope monasteries throw fresh light on the evolution and types of the early monastery configuration in Taxila. The simplest early ones have only one court. This early type of configuration is represented by the Khāder Mohrā D2, possibly D1, and Pippala monasteries. Further development evolved into two courts. The living cells are not only in a private space, but some courts also contain private chapels, as seen in Chir Tope B (Akhauri). Khāder Mohrā D1 represents the later developments and reflects some generality with certain shared features



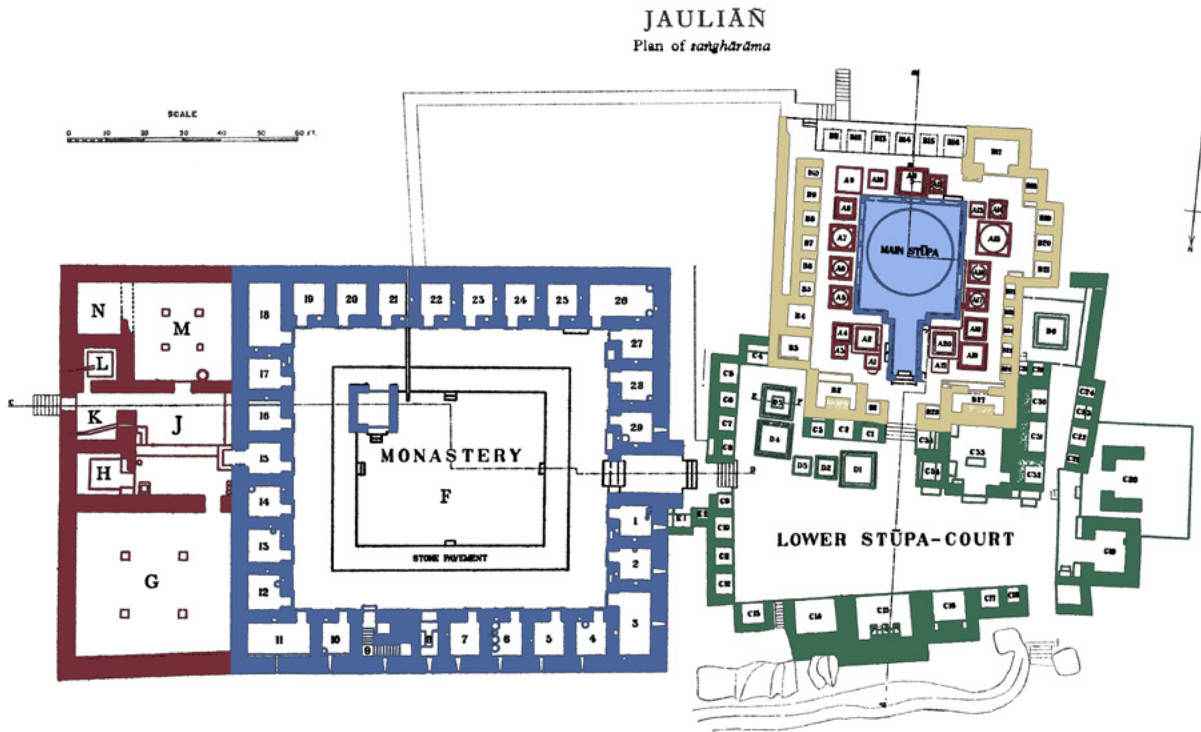


Figure 14. Plan of Jauliān monastery. (Modified from Marshall 1951: vol. 3, pl. 101.)

in many other later monasteries. It should be mentioned that the monasteries in the late Parthian or early Kushan periods do not contain any image-chapels or multiple courts. They are, in general, simple in configuration, whether a single or double court. The focus of the structure is primarily on the *stūpa*, with the living cells and sometimes private chapels surrounding it.

The final steps in the evolution of the Buddhist *saṅghārāma* remained to be taken in the fourth and fifth centuries, when the image-chapel had become as constant and ubiquitous a feature as the *stūpa* itself. In the *saṅghārāma* of Jauliān (Figure 14), for example, we shall see how, as time went on, the living-quarters had come to be completely separated from the courts of public worship; and how the chief cult *stūpa* was placed in a quadrangle of its own, with ranges of image-chapels, in place of the older living cells, on all four sides of it; how, apart from a single small private chapel and some cult images, the monastic quadrangle was reserved exclusively for the living quarters of the monks; and how, finally, the hall of assembly, refectory and kitchen came to be grouped together outside this quadrangle in a position where they would be least likely to interfere either with the meditations of the monks or the devotions of lay-worshippers in the public courts (Marshall 1951: vol. 1, 321).

What we can get from the above is that, a) the image-chapel became as important as the *stūpa* itself, but in earlier times, the *stūpa* court was more prominent (either it was in the centre of the quadrangle court or separated from the living cells); b) the living quarters were later completely separated from the *stūpa*. This again suggests that the *stūpa* and living quarters were together initially and supports what was discussed above; c) now the *stūpa* is in the middle of the quadrangle, and the image-chapels replaced the living cells in the court, in other words, both the *stūpa* and the image-chapels have an equal liturgical function, i.e. they both became the objects of worship; d) more importantly, the old quadrangle with cells on three sides and a single private chapel on the fourth side now has cells on all four sides. The quadrangle became exclusively a living quarter now for the monks; and e) finally, the additional rooms for the practical functions of the living quadrangle, i.e. the hall of assembly, refectory, and kitchen, are

put together in a group outside the living quarters so that they will not interfere with meditation and lay-worshippers' practice.

It can be said that up until the fourth and fifth centuries, Buddhist monasteries in the Greater Gandhāra area went through several configural transformations. Not only did the *stūpa* and living quarter courts get separated, but the living quarters were now in a more secured enclosure, and the image-chapels gradually became as important as the *stūpa* itself for satisfying the increasing needs of the devotees for worshipping and other liturgical purposes.

The configuration of Chinese monasteries did not entirely emulate that of the early monasteries in Taxila such as Chir Tope B or Jauliāñ, but only followed the layout of Khāder Mohrā D2 and Pippala, with the *stūpa* in the centre of the monastery and the cells for monks surrounding it. However, the architectural developments of the monasteries, in general, share similarities with those in Taxila. In the beginning, the *stūpa* in the centre was the main characteristic of all the early monasteries, be it in China, Gandhāra, or India. The monasteries mentioned above (Yungang, Siyan and Siyuan) all had the *stūpa* in the centre of the space and it was the primary object for worshipping although the layout of the Siyuan monastery in Pingcheng, the capital, changed with the *stūpa* in the front aligned with Buddha halls behind, but the focus was still on the *stūpa*. Later on, when the capital moved south to Luoyang, the Yongning monastery there adopted the configuration of the Siyuan monastery and had the *stūpa* and the Buddha halls aligned in the configuration of *qianta houdian*. At the time of the Eastern Wei-Northern Qi (534-577) dynasties in the fifth and sixth centuries, the monasteries were transformed in configuration again, and had multiple courts. This can be best seen from the newly excavated Zhaopengcheng 趙彭城 monastery in Linzhang (modern Handan), Hebei Province.<sup>8</sup> This development in configuration had happened earlier in the Greater Gandhāra area. The direct connection was unclear until the new excavations, as we shall discuss below.

### ***Qianta Houdian* monasteries in Central Plain China and their origin**

The abovementioned excavations can provide us with the evolution of the monasteries in Central Plain China during the fifth and sixth centuries and eventually trace their origins. During the Pingcheng era of the Northern Wei Dynasty, Buddhism flourished. According to the historic record, there were more than one hundred monasteries in the capital and more than two thousand monks and nuns (Wei 1974, CXIV114: 3025). The two thus far excavated monasteries of the time, the Siyuan (Figure 15) and Siyan (Figure 16) monasteries, differ from each other in configuration, and from the Yungang plan, even though both of them were patronized by Empress Dowager Wenming.

Situated on the southern side of Mount Fangshan, north of Pingcheng and south of Empress Dowager Wenming's Yonggu Mausoleum, the Siyuan Monastery, facing south, was constructed in the third year of Taihe (479) (Wei 1974, VII: 147). At the centre of the remains is a square platform in the rectangular courtyard (57 m east-west by 88 m north-south). In the courtyard, the entrance gate, *stūpa*, and Buddha halls are on the north-south axis. The base of the wooden *stūpa* is square (12 m in size). To the north of the *stūpa* is a Buddha hall of width 21 m, east to west (with seven bays), and depth 6 metres, south to north (two bays). It can be seen that the monastery has a *qianta houdian* configuration. In the north-west corner of the hall, remains were found of bed holes made of mudbricks.<sup>9</sup> Archaeologists believed these were residential cells. Around the *stūpa* base is a square cloister, five bays wide, in whose interior wall (i.e. the exterior wall of the *stūpa*) were unearthed a small number of fragments of Buddha and bodhisattva images. This indicates that the cloister was enshrined with Buddha images along *stūpa* walls, so that the devotees were able to circumambulate the *stūpa* and worship the Buddha images. This is very much the

<sup>8</sup> See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo & Hebeisheng wenwu yanjiusuo yecheng gongzuodui 2003: 3-6.

<sup>9</sup> For the detailed report of the excavation, see Datongshi bowoguan 2007.

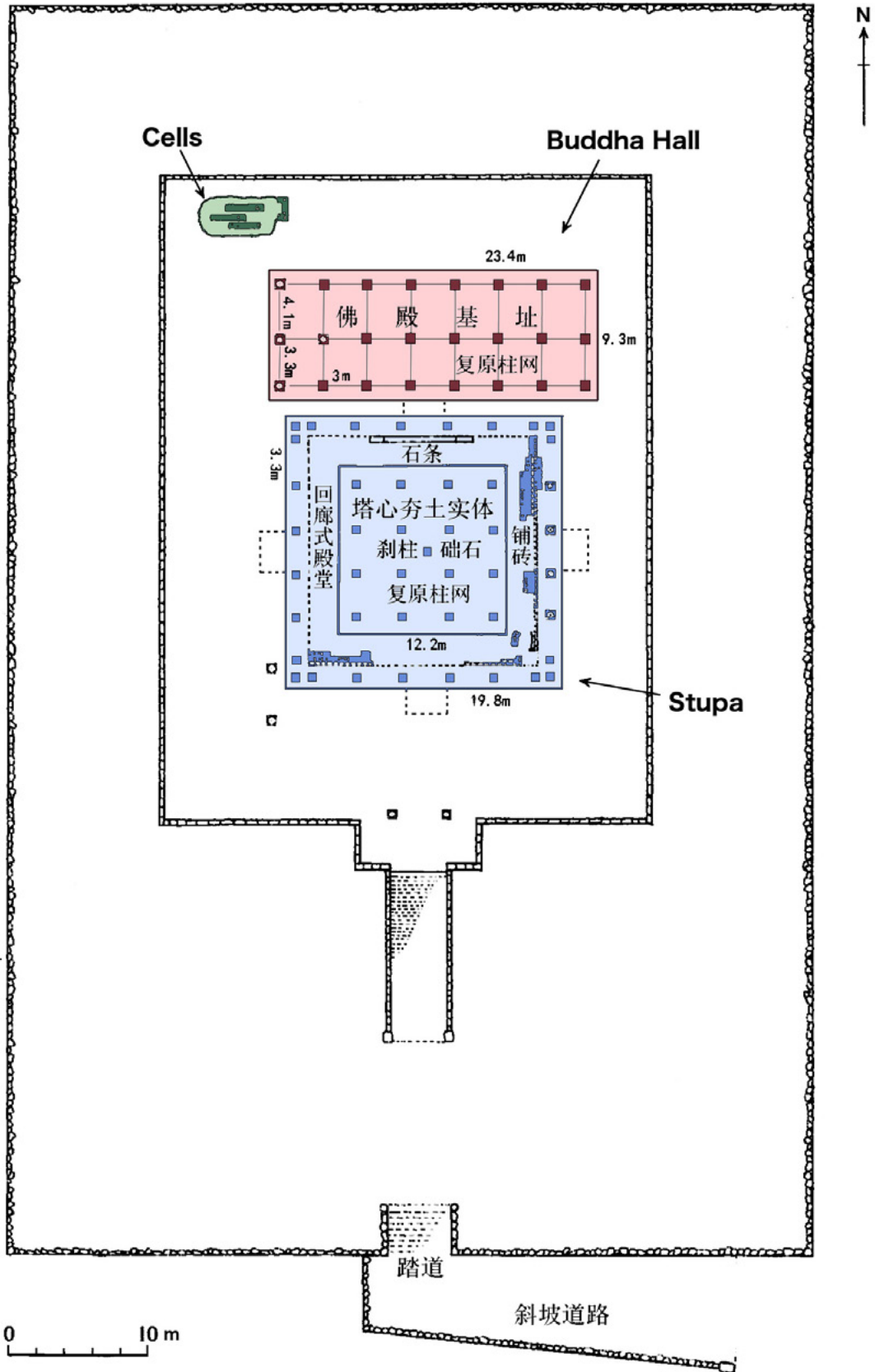


Figure 15. Siyuan Monastery, Fangshan, Datong. (Plan: modified from Qian Guoxiang, *Zhongyuan wenwu* 4 [2017], pl. 1.)



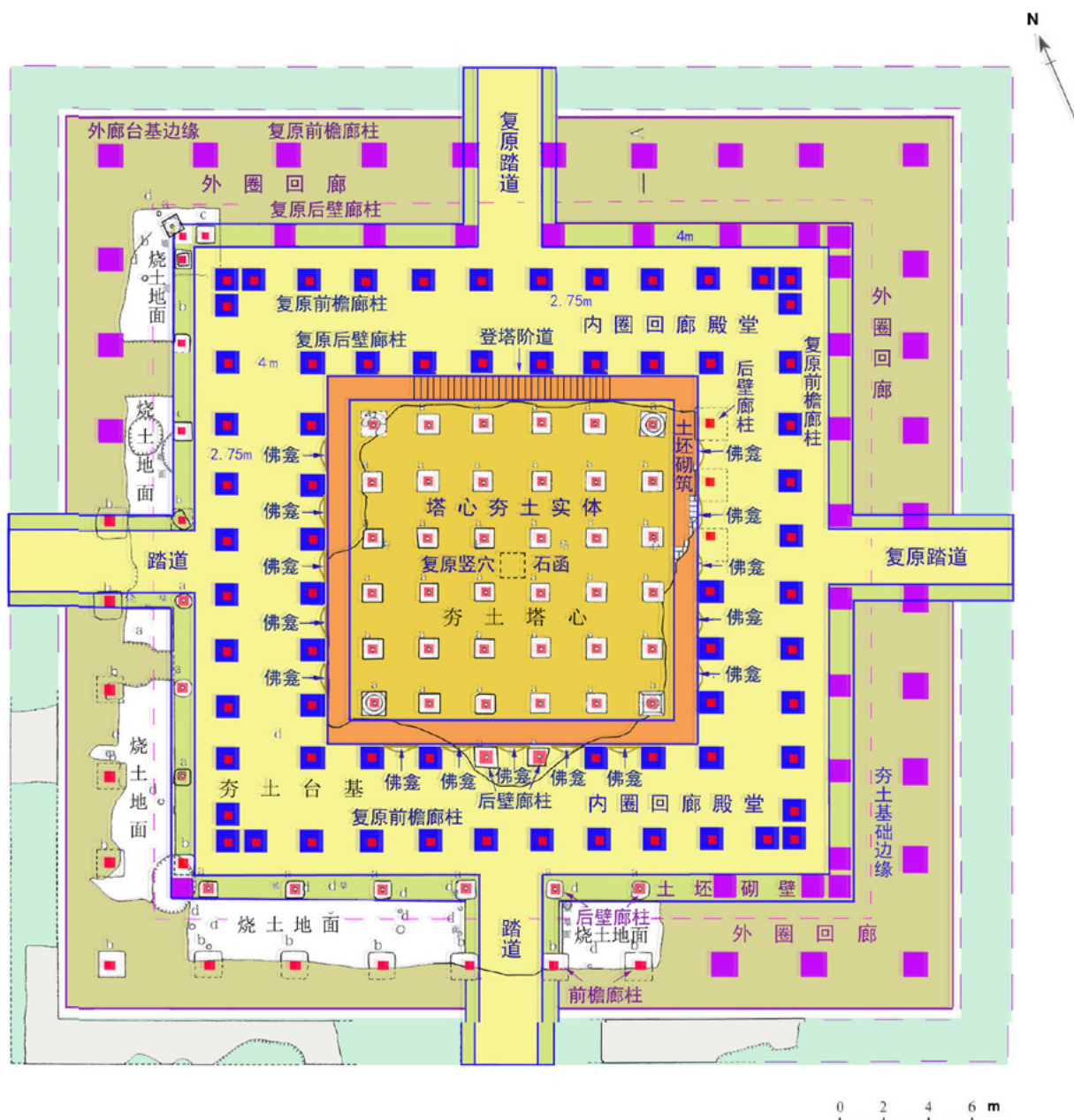


Figure 16. Siyuan Monastery, Fangshan, Datong. (Plan: modified from Qian Guoxiang, *Zhongyuan wenwu* 4 [2017], pl. 2.)

same as what is seen on the votive *stūpa* walls and shrines in the monasteries of the Greater Gandhāra area. After the Siyuan monastery was abandoned, it was never reused or reconstructed. Therefore, the monastery remains the original structure of the Northern Wei.

Another monastery, the Siyan *fo*tu (monastery) in Chaoyang city, Liaoning province, was also constructed, as the *Beishi* (History of Northern Dynasties) informs us, under the patronage of the Empress Dowager Wenming (Li 1974: 13: 496).<sup>10</sup> The monastery is square in shape (49 m in size), at the centre of which is the base of a wooden *stūpa*. The plinths of the columns are arranged in four concentric squares. The outside square initially had twenty-eight plinths, outside of which there seems to have been a fifth

<sup>10</sup> Li Yuqun suggested that the monastery was built during the Taihe era (AD 477-490). See Li 2009: 310.

square. Between the fourth and fifth squares there probably was a cloister around the monastery. Many images of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, disciples, and flying *Apsaras* were unearthed in the ruins of the *stūpa*, which indicates that images were on the *stūpa* walls, as in the Siyuan monastery, and many others in Greater Gandhāra.

It can be seen that the Siyuan *fo*tu and Siyan *fo*tu monasteries differ in configuration. The latter has the early monastery configuration, centred on the *stūpa*, which is surrounded by a cloister or cells on its four sides. The Siyan monastery is more like the Yungang monastery, the earliest thus far excavated. All three of these monasteries were constructed during the Pingcheng era, but differ from one another in configuration. At the same time, they share one feature, i.e. they all have a wooden *stūpa* as the primary structure and the main object. The Siyan monastery had only a *stūpa* in the centre with a cloister surrounding it, which was the layout of a Buddhist monastery and traditional Chinese courtyard before the fourth century. It is interesting to note that both the Siyan and Siyuan monasteries were patronized

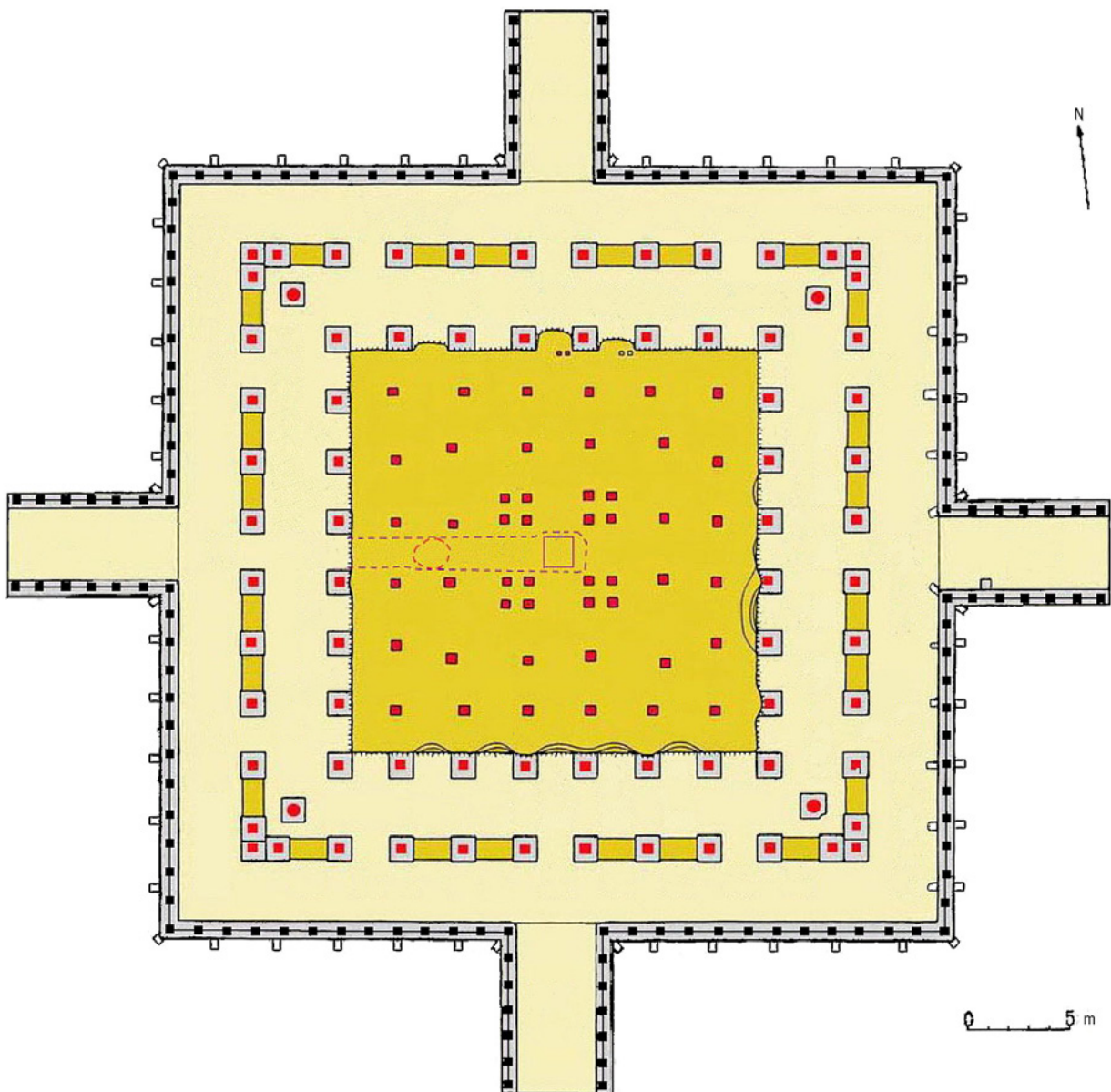


Figure 17. Yongning Monastery, Luoyang. (Plan modified from Qian Guoxiang, *Zhongyuan wenwu* 4 [2017], pl. 3.)

by the Empress Dowager Wenming, but their layouts are different. This implies that when the new architectural layout of *qianta houdian* emerged in the fifth century, the traditional early monastery configuration did not immediately disappear. Caves 5 and 6, and caves 11 and 13 in Yungang also have *qianta houdian* configurations. This is the same as the configuration of free-standing monasteries in Central Plain China. The excavations of these monasteries led scholars to a better understanding of the cave composition. We were not previously clear why these caves were paired in this manner.

The *qianta houdian* configuration in Pingcheng was followed by the Yongning monastery (Figure 17) in Luoyang. In *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang* (Yang 1978: 2; Wang 2014: 13 and 15-18), we are informed:

The Yongning Monastery was constructed in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the Xiping period (516) by decree of Empress Dowager Ling... Within the precincts [of the monastery] was a nine-storied wooden stūpa. Rising nine hundred Chinese feet above the ground, it formed the base for a mast that extended for another one hundred Chinese feet; thus together they soared one thousand Chinese feet above the ground, and could be seen as far away from the capital as one hundred *li*. In the course of excavating for the construction of the monastery, thirty golden statues were found deep underground; this was interpreted as an auspicious reward for the Empress Dowager's conversion to Buddhism... On top of the mast was a golden jar inlaid with precious stones. It had the capacity of twenty-five piculs. Underneath the bejeweled jar were thirty tiers of golden plates to receive the dew. Golden bells hung from each of the plates. In addition, chains linked the mast with each of the four corners of the stūpa. Golden bells, each about the size of a stone jar, were also suspended from the linkworks... The stūpa has four sides, each having three doors and six windows. Painted in vermillion, each door had five rows of golden nails... North of the stūpa was a Buddhist hall, which was shaped like the Palace of the Great Ultimate... In the Hall was a golden statue of the Buddha eighteen Chinese feet high, along with ten medium-sized images – three of sewn pearls, five of woven golden threads, and two of jade. The superb artistry was matchless, unparalleled in its day. The monastery had over one thousand cloisters for the monks, both single cloisters and multilevel ones, decorated with carved beams and painted walls. The doors, painted in blue designs, had carved windows... The walls of the monastery were all covered with short rafters beneath the tiles in the same style as our contemporary palace walls... Under the archway were images of four guardians and four lions, adorned with gold, silver, pearls, and rare stones... The East and West Gates resembled the South Gate, except that the towers had only two stories... Travelers in the capital city often took shelter there.

The monastery was burned down in the third year of Yongxi (AD 534). In 1979, the Institute of Archaeology at the China Academy of Social Sciences conducted an archaeological excavation at the monastery (Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 1996). According to their report, the monastery faced south and was rectangular in shape. The ruins of the stūpa base, square in shape, are in the centre but slightly towards the south. The stairs in the middle of each side of the stūpa base create a cruciform, a reminiscence of the Rawak stūpa discovered by Aurel Stein in 1901 (Stein 1907). Exquisite images were excavated around the base of the stūpa.<sup>11</sup> To the north of the stūpa is a large rammed earth Buddha hall. Clearly, the Yongning monastery continued the Siyuan monastery layout of *qianta houdian* with the stūpa in front and the Buddha in the rear.

The transformation in configuration, as stated earlier, took place in the south of Yecheng during the Eastern Wei-Northern Qi. The monastery began to have multiple courts as shown in the

<sup>11</sup> After several excavations, more than 2000 colored images of Buddha, bodhisattva and disciples were excavated. These images should be from the niches on the stūpa and cloister walls. See Qian 2007.

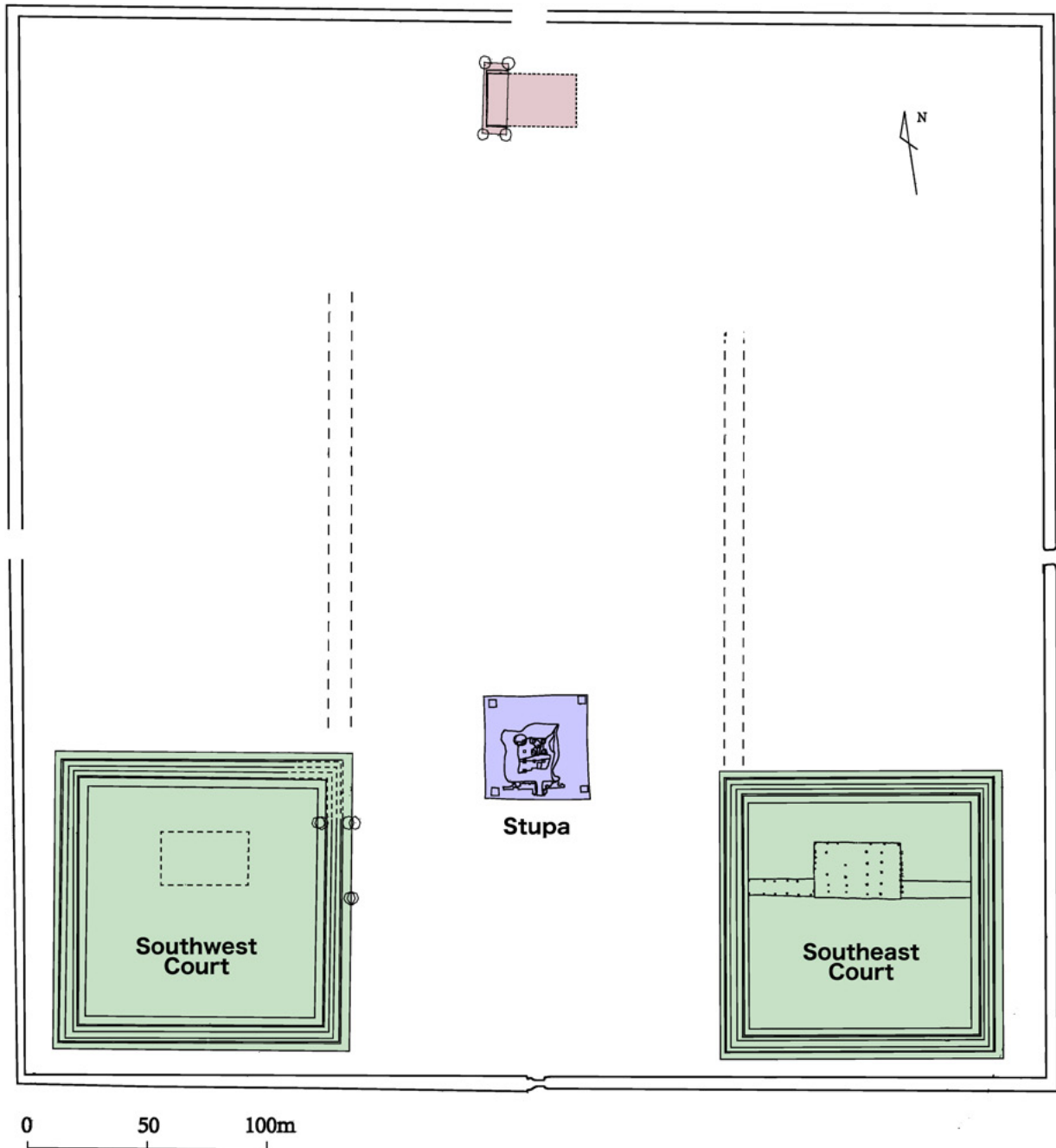


Figure 18. Zhaopengcheng Monastery, Linzhang. (Plan modified from *Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogusuo, yecheng kaogudui, Kaogu* 7 [2013], fig. 2.)

Zhaopengcheng monastery (Figure 18). The archaeological report shows that the monastery, square in shape, larger in scale than the Yongning monastery, faces south (Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo & Hebeisheng wenwu yanjiusuo yecheng kaogudui 2010).<sup>12</sup> Judging from its location and scale, archaeologists believed that this was a royal monastery. In the centre of the central court, slightly towards the south is the base of the wooden *stūpa* (Figure 19). At the northernmost end of the central court is a large structure, seven bays wide. It should be noted that the distance between the large structure and the ruins of the wooden *stūpa* is far. It is unclear

<sup>12</sup> See also Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo & Hebeisheng wenwu yanjiusuo yecheng kaogudui 2013a; 2013b.



whether there were structures in between the two; further excavations are needed. In the southeast and southwest corners of the monastery, the ruins of two square cloisters, 110 m in size, were found on each side. This indicates that these were two large courts. At the centre, slightly towards north, of the southeast court, the ruins of a Buddha hall, seven bays wide and five bays deep, were excavated. On each side of the Buddha hall is a winged cloister which connects with the outer cloister on the east and west sides. In addition, ruins of a large Buddha hall were unearthed in the southwest court as well. The scale is roughly the same. From what archaeologists unearthed and the configuration of the Buddha halls, it is clear that the monastery is centred on the *stūpa* with multiple courts. From the single court with *stūpa* and living cells together, to the dominant *qianta houdian* configuration, and then to multiple courts, monasteries in Central Plain China underwent several transformations. One question that arises is: where did the dominant configuration of *qianta houdian* influence come from?

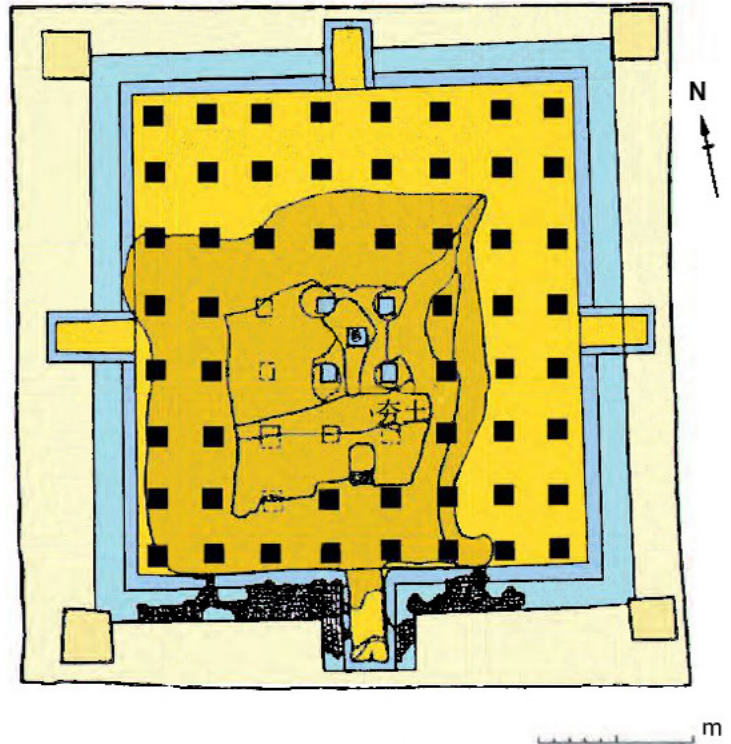


Figure 19. Zhaopengcheng stupa, Linzhang. (Plan modified from Qian Guoxiang, *Zhongyuan wenwu* 4 [2017], pl. 5.)

As is widely accepted, early Chinese Buddhism was influenced by Central Asian Buddhism, but not directly influenced by Indian Buddhism. Central Asia's contribution to the history of Buddhism lies largely in its role as an intermediary in the spread of the *dharma* to East Asia (Robinson et al 1996: 166). In the first century AD, a group of nomadic Indo-Scythians swept down from the north and gained control of northern India, Afghanistan, and a large part of central Asia from the Aral Sea east to the border of China, founding the Kushan dynasty (c. AD 32-375) (Robinson et al 1996: 167). The ideal location of the Kushan empire allowed it to control part of the Silk Road and to open it to cultural influences from all directions. The Kushans developed a synthesis of Graeco-Roman, Persian (Sasanian), and Indian styles in what appear to be among the first sculptures of the Buddha in human form. They also seem to be responsible for introducing the towering form of the Buddhist *stūpa* to India, topped by a tall, tapering spire, replacing the earlier hemispherical form. The Kushan taste in *stūpa* architecture continued to influence *stūpa* design throughout Asia, from the tall spires of Thai and Burmese *cetiya*s (*caitya stūpas*) to the multi-storey pagodas of China, Korea, and Japan (Robinson et al 1996: 167). During the Kushan period, Buddhism and its associated architecture spread from Afghanistan north-east into Central Asia and, ultimately, eastward to China and Japan, rather than directly from its north-eastern Indian origin (Ball 2008: 106).

From the descriptions of the nine-storey pagoda at the Yongning monastery above, it can be said that the initial influence of the pagoda was from Central Asia. Central Asians were not only on the receiving end of outside influences during this period. They also were active exporting Buddhist ideas to other areas, most notably to China (Ball 2008). This is reflected not only by the Buddhist teachings themselves, but also from Buddhist image-making and architecture. The layout of Buddhist monasteries in central

Asia, through Xinjiang, eventually exerted great influence on that of Central Plain China where it became predominant. This is closely related to the active interaction between Buddhism in Central Plain China and Kucha. As Tang Yongtong pointed out, in the many kingdoms of the Western Regions, Kashmir, Khotan, and Kucha are three important strategic posts and Buddhism there had a great impact on Buddhism in China (Tang 1997: 265).

The earliest *qianta houdian* plan, in fact, first emerged in Central Asia, as represented in Kara-Tepe and Fayaz-Tepe (Stavisky 1988).<sup>13</sup> Kara-Tepe is a major Buddhist monastery site occupying a small hill in the north-west corner of old Termez, within the city walls. Fayaz-tepe, the site of another Buddhist monastery, lies about one kilometre north-west, outside the city walls (Rhie 1999). As Nancy Steinhardt suggested, third- to fifth-century cave-temples near Termez in Uzbekistan, also formerly part of the Kushan empire, similarly comprised a *stūpa* and Buddha hall at the focus of the courtyards (Steinhardt 2014: 121). Remains near Tumshuk in western Xinjiang between Kuche and Uzbekistan are another example of this kind of temple complex (Hambis et al 1961-1964). Also, it was suggested that the *qianta houdian* configuration of the Wushituer 烏什吐尔 and Xiahetuer 夏合吐尔 monasteries in Xinjiang were also influenced by that of Kara-tepe in central Asia (Lin 2018: 42). It can be seen that the roots of the *qianta houdian* configuration in Central Plain China lie in the monasteries of third-century in Xinjiang, but the deeper roots lie in southern Uzbekistan of central Asia. The deepest roots lie in Greater Gandhāra. The earliest monastery discovered in Yungang traced its roots all the way to Taxila. Likewise, the multiple court plan shown in the Zhaopengcheng monastery traces its roots to the Greater Gandhāra area as well.

### Concluding remarks

The above analysis not only helped us further understand these monasteries themselves, but also, more importantly, made clear the connections to one another in the process of developments in Buddhism dissemination from west to east. In the early times, there was no such configuration of Buddhist monasteries as a self-contained monastery with a main *stūpa* and *vihāra* within the high-walled space. There was neither *stūpa*, nor the monastery cells, let alone Buddha or lecture halls. Buddhist monks spent much of their time in the Bamboo garden near Rājagṛiha, in the Jetavana near Śrāvastī, in the Mango Grove near Vaishālī and in the Deer Park near Benares. The *vināya* texts also did not mention either the *stūpa* or the *vihāra*. We do not have evidence of a *stūpa* earlier than the reign of Aśoka in the middle of the third century BC, and we cannot find an example of a walled, self-contained monastery until the first or second century AD (Marshall 1951: vol. 1, 232). The *stūpa* did not become an object of veneration until the time of Aśoka who was one of the most famous kings in the history of India, and was portrayed as a great devotee and supporter of the Buddhist sangha. He was a builder of *stūpas*. Soon, the *stūpa*, with or without relics, began to be regarded as the most outstanding and ubiquitous emblem of Buddhism and worthy of worship for its own sake. After that a *stūpa* almost became the symbol of the faith. To erect a *stūpa* of any shape or form is to build religious merit.

This is the same in China. As Ge Hong (AD 283-343) pointed out, a *stūpa* is equal to a monastery. Consequently, building a *stūpa* is the same as building a monastery. In early times, the main structure in a Buddhist monastery was the *stūpa*. And the monasteries were often named after the number of storeys of a *stūpa*, such as the Five-Storey Monastery where Dao'an (AD 312-385) lived and the Five-Storey Grand Monastery in Pingcheng. When Buddhism developed further and flourished, the single *stūpa* was far from enough for liturgical functions. The monasteries were not just for worshipping, they became the venue for lectures and Dharma teachings as well. Image chapels and lecture halls therefore emerged in the fourth century. According to the record of Weishu, in the first

<sup>13</sup> See also Stavisky & Mkrtychev 1996.

year of Tianxing (AD 398) the Five-Storey *stūpa*, the Mount Grdhrakuta (Vulture Peak) and Mount Sumeru Halls were built. In addition, lecture and meditation halls and monks' cells were constructed (Wei 1974, CXIV114: 3030). It can be seen that the *stūpa* was built first and then Buddha halls, halls for lectures and meditation, as well as the living cells being added accordingly to the main *stūpa*. Evidently, the monastery plan was transformed from a single *stūpa* structure to that of *stūpa*, Buddha hall, and lecture hall on the north-south axis, a *qianta houdian* configuration. In addition to the *stūpa* in the centre, image chapels and lecture halls are now equally important. Image worshipping became an important part of liturgy for Buddhist devotees and image halls became an important component of Buddhist monasteries.

The prevailing configuration of *qianta houdian* was eventually exported east to the Baekje kingdom. The Buddhist monastery remains such as Chōngnimsa monastery and others during the Baekje (Paekche) period (18 BC-AD 660) in ancient Korea show the configuration of the monasteries is that of *stūpa*, Buddha hall, and lecture halls on the north-south axis, and this was probably influenced by the configuration of Buddhist monasteries in Central Plain China (Su 2011: 243).

Our final question to be answered is why the Yungang plan came directly from Taxila? As is widely known, Emperor Taiwu (r. 424-52) of the Northern Wei had frequent contacts with Buddhist kingdoms from the Western Regions such as Shanshan, Yanqi, Kucha, Khotan, Sogdiana, and Kashmir, where the construction of Buddhist monasteries thrived (Su 1990: 123-25). Tanyao, the chief administrator śramana, was the main architect in charge of the excavation of the rock-cut caves of Yungang. Naturally he was involved in the construction of monasteries above the caves as well. He was responsible for the entire Yungang complex including the translation of the sūtras. One of the sūtras, the *Sūtra of the Miscellaneous Treasures* (Zabaozang jing), translated by Kikkāya and Tanyao, is an important source to answer our questions about why the earliest monastery thus far excavated is directly connected with Taxila, but not with the traditional Chinese structure, central Asia, or even with other Greater Gandhāra areas outside Taxila. First of all, many stories narrated in the sūtra happened in Greater Gandhāra. Secondly, and more importantly, the translator Kikkāya is actually believed to have been from there as well (Willems 1992: 507-15).

Furthermore, I have argued elsewhere that the sūtras translated by Tanyao and others played an essential role in image-making in the excavation of the caves (Yi 2018: 11, 46). The subjects of the caves are primarily from these sūtras. For instance, the stories from the Zabaozang jing are visually portrayed in caves 9 and 10. Evidently, words and images are closely associated in Yungang and the primary inspiration for builders was from the sūtras translated by Kikkāya and others. If image-making was directly associated with Greater Gandhāra, it is not difficult to imagine that monastery building could be from there as well. It is therefore not unreasonable to believe that there was a direct connection between Yungang and Taxila, and Buddhist monks played a pivotal role in the dissemination of Buddhism in many aspects. Tanyao and Kikkāya, both of whom came from the regions that connected and transmitted different cultures, were key figures in the construction of the Yungang complex.

Chinese Buddhist monasteries were not only directly influenced by those in Taxila, but also by those in Central Asia, in the old Termez area, which we tended to neglect in the past. Now new archaeological findings offer us opportunities to revisit the literary sources and hard evidence. The '[Buddha] halls on the mountain and over water, and the smoke [of the incense]-filled temples' mentioned in the first literary record of Yungang had never been comprehended or corroborated before the new excavation (Li 2007: 316). It is just that John Marshall did not live to see that Gandhāran influence could have been spread as far east as Pingcheng, the capital of the Northern Wei dynasty in China.

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